



**Community Needs Response Plan for
Hoesch Memorial Public Library
Alma, NE**

2023-2027

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PLANNING PROCESS

Community Needs Response Planning Committee:

Keri Anderson, Library Director
Don Jardon, Library Board President
Bryan Lubeck, Library Board
Doris Brandon, Library Board
Pam Miller, Library Board
Betty Adkins, Library Board

Key Activities:

- Planning and Design: Library Director and Library Board met to identify a plan of action and timeline for a Community Needs Response Plan.
- Community Engagement: Input from the City Administrator, Mayor, business leaders, and random community members and library users was solicited in the spring and summer of 2022. A short survey was used with both community members downtown, and library users who filled it out in the library.
- Setting Community Needs Plan: Library Board members and the Library Director completed the planning process in three sessions during summer and fall 2022 at Library Board meetings.

Evaluation and Implementation: The plan will be carried out over five years following the approval of the plan. At least twice each year, the plan will be reviewed and adjusted as needed.

MISSION STATEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY

Mission: The mission of Hoesch Memorial Public Library (a.k.a. Alma Public Library) is to provide educational and recreational materials and services for the community in a welcoming and friendly environment.

Hoesch Memorial Library was built and dedicated in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Karl Hoesch by Mr. and Mrs. Albert Hoesch in 1978, replacing the Carnegie Library in Alma. The collection consists of 18,673 adult, young adult, and children's books, DVDs, audio books, and periodicals. Other services include access to materials through interlibrary loan, 5 public computers, free online access to databases made possible through the Nebraska Library Commission, and e-books and audio books available on Overdrive/Libby. The library, open 40 hours per week, serves as a community space for programs for children and adults, including summer reading programs, STEM activities, book discussion groups, and author visits. Library spaces are useful for community organizations, group meetings, and continuing education activities.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Alma is a small, rural town with a population of 1,043 located in Harlan County, Nebraska. Alma's population has had a slowly declining population based on past census records. The population has a very small diverse population, just 4% of the residents. The population distribution is: 7.6% under 5 years old, 12.4% are 6-17 years old, 53.7% are 18-64 years of age, 26.3% of the population is over 65 years old. 16.9% of Alma's population have disabilities – 9.3% of those have hearing difficulties and 4% have vision difficulties. *

The employment rate for those 16 years and older is 63.4%. The median household income is \$41,875. Approximately 12.3% of residents are identified as having incomes below the poverty line. *

The local employment is 27.4% in educational services, health care and social assistance, 11% in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, 11.3% in constructions, 11.7% in wholesale trade, 8.2% in retail trade, and the rest in other trades and services. *

The Alma Public School district serves Alma as well as rural residents, and some of the children from neighboring small towns. The school includes Kindergarten through 12th grades. The Head Start program serves pre-school children who qualify based on income. And 14.2% of the children under 5 years old are in pre-school, while many others are in daycare. *

The town has a city park, a large swimming pool with splash pad features and a slide, a golf course, tennis court, a movie theater, and a hiking/biking path along the lake. The Chamber of Commerce is active in supporting the community. There is also an active Rotary group, and two Sororities which support educational initiatives. For communication purposes there is a weekly newspaper.

Alma is bordered by the second-largest lake in the state (Harlan County Lake) providing recreation and fishing for the residents. The lake, along with campgrounds and hunting, draws a large number of tourists during the year.

*per the 2020 U.S. Census

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

At the June 2022 Library Board meeting, a questionnaire was shared, and it was decided to utilize it around the community and at the library to get information for the 2023-2027 Community Needs Response Plan. During the summer, Library Board members and staff of Hoesch Memorial Library began to gather community input, using this questionnaire. Community members, including the City Administrator, the Mayor, business managers, and random people shopping downtown were asked to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also shared with patrons when they visited the library. Around 45 individuals completed the questionnaire.

Building on Strengths:

The residents of Alma feel that this community is a very good place to live. At least two-thirds of respondents feel positively about the quality of life available here. The community-minded town with a friendly, small-town atmosphere is one reason they enjoy living in Alma. Of great importance is the safety offered by good law enforcement; having a progressive, up-to-date hospital and good assisted living and care homes. For families there is a good school and year-round sports programs for the youth; and a new swimming pool for all to enjoy.

Community Needs:

The following themes emerged as the community's top needs:

- ❖ Housing: Providing more available and affordable housing/rentals. It was also mentioned that many existing houses need maintenance. A "Habitat for Community" was suggested as a possible project.
- ❖ Shortage of Labor Force: Attracting workforce and skilled trades. Shortage of labor for local businesses, restaurants, daycare. More workforce/business needs for appliance sales/repair, vehicle repair, and clothing and shoes for men, children and teens.
- ❖ Park Utilization: Need to utilize City Park for more/different events. Need public restrooms. Add disc golf, pickle ball court.

LIBRARY ANALYSIS

LIBRARY STRENGTHS	EXTERNAL RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent staff with varied skills and knowledge • Open 40 hours/week • 5 public computers • 5G Broadband • Improved Wi-Fi for public use • Monetary support from a Trust Fund • Active Friends of the Library group • New Integrated Library System • New Webpage • Local business support for Summer Reading Program -- coupons/prizes • Summer Reading Program, for all ages now • Overdrive/Libby subscription • Databases provided by NE Library Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5G Broadband in Alma • Extension Service to partner with for programming • Greater appreciation of the library's free resources during a down economy • Greater realization of library's relevance ("more than books") • Modern medical facilities • Improvements to local Nursing Home and Assisted Living facilities • Good Senior Center • Strong school system
LIBRARY WEAKNESSES	EXTERNAL BARRIORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small budget – capped by the City • Never enough funding • Unable to pay competitive wages, especially with capping the budget • Could use more part-time staff hours for programming • Cannot add on to library due to location • Lack of enough work/storage space • Location (not near downtown area) • Small number of parking spaces (shared with park visitors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More affordable housing is needed, both for purchase and rental • Declining population • Aging business owners, poses threat to closures of businesses • Economy – instability, fear of recession, and inflation • Workforce – not easy to retain reliable workers; turnover especially in part-time positions • Never enough funding

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1: Through outreach, develop and strengthen relationships with the different age groups to aid in their feelings of inclusion and belonging in the community.

What are we already doing in this area?

- Taking 50 books to the Sr. Center once a month for patrons to select from for check out.
- Providing checkout of 35 large print and darker print books each month to the residents at the Hillcrest Terrace assisted living center.

What significant actions will we take over the next five years to make tangible progress on this goal?

- **Objective 1a.** Provide off-site story times at the daycare once or twice a month during the school year.
- **Objective 1b.** Assist with 2-3 Head Start programs a year, doing a story and a corresponding activity.
- **Objective 1c.** Visit at a parents' meeting at the daycare/preschool about how important reading with children is and how the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program works.

Goal 2: Make available new and existing community-based and area-based resources for supporting youth, families, individuals and businesses in economic need.

What are we already doing in this area?

We do not have an existing manual, but provide computers for patrons to look resources up.

What significant actions will we take over the next five years to make tangible progress on this goal?

- **Objective 2a.** Work with community groups to compile a community-based and area-based resource manual for use with families in need of assistance.
- **Objective 2b.** Make the manual available for local business-owners, workers, and entrepreneurs, by partnering with the Chamber of Commerce or other organizations.
- **Objective 2c.** Train staff on how to locate community resources and connect patrons to them.
- **Objective 2d.** Host programs at the library using community-based organizations to share information about local resources.

Goal 3: Provide resources for the population who are unable to find jobs, as well as aid the businesses who are having a hard time filling positions.

What are we already doing in this area?

- Providing computers for those who wish to create their resume or apply on-line for jobs.

What significant actions will we take over the next five years to make tangible progress on this goal?

- **Objective 3a.** Host a career fair for business owners to visit with prospective employees.
 - **Objective 3b.** Locate and provide speakers to host career related seminars, including how to write a good resume.
 - **Objective 3c.** Provide computer skills programs and Office Suite tutorials for those who need those job skills.
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EVALUATION

- Each goal will be evaluated once per quarter by the staff, and a progress report will be shared with the library board at the next meeting.
- Every twelve months, the Library Director and Library Board will review the plan and make adjustment if needed.